

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 371 334

CS 011 763

AUTHOR McCabe, Don
TITLE The Mechanics of English Spelling.
INSTITUTION AVKO Educational Research Foundation, Clio, MI.
REPORT NO ISBN-1-56400-120-2
PUB DATE 93
NOTE 25p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.)
(120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Consonants; Elementary Secondary Education; *English;
*Spelling; Spelling Instruction; Vowels
IDENTIFIERS Spelling Patterns

ABSTRACT

Noting that any word in the English language may be defined as having a "base" sound that conveys meaning, this booklet argues that the literacy problem may be solved through systematic instruction in the mechanics of English spelling. The booklet discusses the two distinct types of bases in the English language--common (one syllable) and power (polysyllabic). The booklet notes that, while students learn the spelling patterns of common bases up to grade three, they do not learn the patterns of the power bases that make up the bulk of the words they read in grades four and above. The booklet then discusses the role of vowels and consonants in the mechanics of English spelling. The booklet also presents observations about the relationship of the spellings of consonant sounds to reading and teaching, and offers a rationale for the basic superiority of the current English system of spelling when compared to any proposed phonetic spelling system. (RS)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED 371 334

The Mechanics of English Spelling

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

by
Don McCabe

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D. McCabe

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS011763

Copyright © 1993 AVKO Educational Research Foundation, Inc.
Printed in the United States of America.

Publisher's Cataloging in Publication Data

McCabe, Donald J.

1. Spelling —Miscellanea 2. Curriculum—Miscellanea 3. Literacy
and Tutor Reference Tool.

Library of Congress Subject Headings: Spelling, Curriculum

Library of Congress Classification Number: LB1050.2F79

Library of Congress Card Number: To be determined

Dewey Decimal Classification Number 428.4

ISBN: 1-56400-120-2

AVKO is a non-profit organization run 100% by volunteers

For information on AVKO's services or its educational
materials write for a free catalog

AVKO Educational Research Foundation
3084 W. Willard Road Suite M
Clio, MI 48420

Telephone (810) 686-9283
FAX (810) 686-1101

The Mechanics of English Spelling

Everywhere I go I hear somebody say, "I'm the world's worst speller."

Even if it is a logical impossibility, it seems that there must be at least twenty million world's worst spellers. And I think I have met almost half of them.

What is so frustrating is that many of these self-proclaimed world's worst spellers are in a position to help others become good spellers. But they have a built-in rationalization that justifies their non-action. If they are the world's worst speller and if they also happen to be teachers, superintendents of schools, curriculum supervisors, editors of educational magazines, or leaders of educational organizations, and if *they* can't learn to spell, how can anyone? So why bother? It's no big deal.

So what's the answer? Perhaps there is none for them. Closed minds are never opened by simple truths. But for those who do not consider themselves "the world's worst speller" there is a chance that they can listen and become part of the solution rather than part of the problem.

Is there a solution?

I think so. But the solution certainly will not be doing more of what we have always been doing. That is part of the problem.



4

What are some of the things that we have always been doing?

- Giving students words to study.

Results:

A-students already know at least 13 out of the 15 words given for study (or 18 out of the 20, 22 out of the 25, etc).

C-students already know about half the words (8) and memorize correctly about half of the words they need to learn (4).

D- & E- students are lucky to already know any of the words given. They can memorize more of the spellings than C and A students have to (e.g., 6 words) and still fail because 6 words out of 15 isn't enough to pass. What have they learned? Unfortunately, they have learned that they are dumb.

- Correcting students' misspellings on papers.

Results:

Teachers spend countless hours carefully marking all mistakes. Students generally spend a total of two seconds looking at what the system has carefully taught them is important (the grade) and then crumple up the paper and throw it away.

- Learning the 1,000 most frequently used words that account for 90% of all normal writing.

Results: Students who do manage to learn these words as they might 1,000 different telephone numbers, will still misspell 10% of all the words they write. Can you imagine how frustrating it has to be if you had to stop and use a dictionary for every tenth word? I would have had to stop twice just in the last sentence!

5

What are some of the things that have worked?

- Student self-correction. (Fitzsimmons, Loomer, 1978)
- Carefully programmed and sequenced presentations of words that follow regular patterns. (McCabe, 1991)

Some of the things that work but haven't been tried!

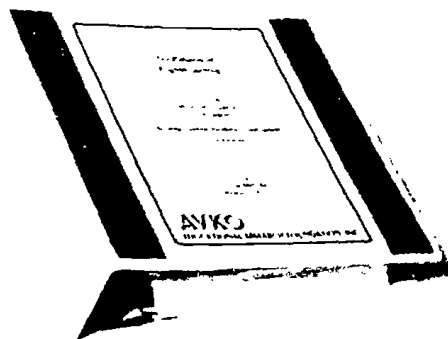
- **Systematic** teaching of the mechanics of the code/s we use in English spelling. (Webb, McCabe, 1990)
- **Systematic** teaching of the differences between spoken and written language, i.e., the elisions and omissions of sounds -- the "Whudjuh Git" for "What did you get?" (McCabe, 1991).

Why haven't these techniques been tried?

Up until recently, there has not been a complete compilation of all the patterns and all the words that follow these patterns in a format that is usable by either teachers or researchers. And the mechanics of the code (not the code itself) was not really discovered until this compilation of the patterns was almost completed.

So we cannot easily blame the scholars, the researchers, or the teachers for not knowing that which was not available to them.

Even today, the odds are that your nearest university library doesn't even have a copy of *The Patterns of English Spelling* (McCabe, 1992).



"A copy of this book should be in every classroom. It's a reference that can and should be used by every reading teacher at every level."

- Dr. Patrick Groff, San Diego State University.

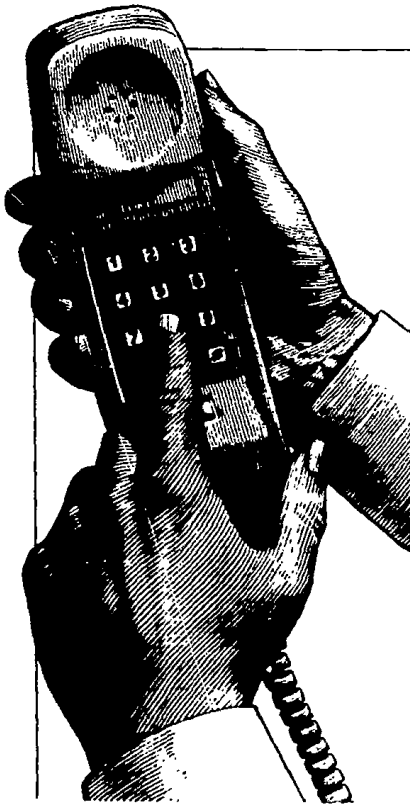
6

Premise: The difficulty in learning a telephone number is directly related to the ease of learning the patterns embedded in it. For example which numbers would be easier to learn? Those in column A or in Column B.

A	B	
C218B00D3A1	1 (800) ABCD-123	(O.D.S.)
31188080822	1 (800) 228-8813	(C.L.C.)

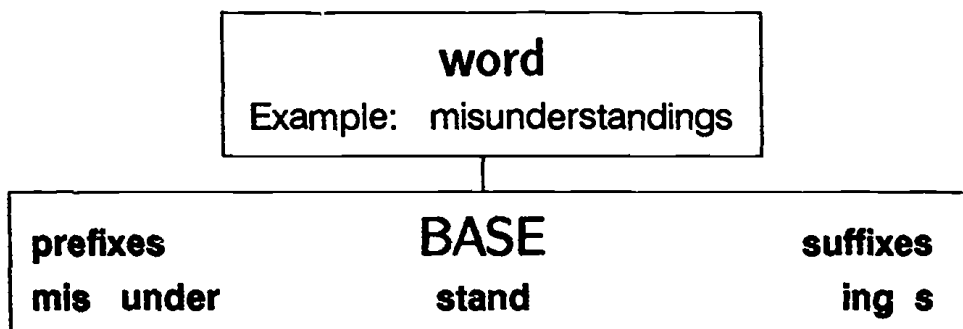
Obviously Column B is easier. And the Orton Dyslexia Society's (O.D.S.) number is easier to learn than the number of the Contact Literacy Center (C.L.C.) because of its special combination of patterns.

What is true about learning telephone numbers is also true to a greater extent in learning the spellings of words. Let's take two words **precious** which has only eight letters and **misunderstanding** which has fifteen letters. The eight letter word **precious** can be correctly spelled by less than half the adult population. Yet four out of five can spell the bigger word, **misunderstanding**. The reason lies in the patterns which each word contains and whether or not there has been much of an opportunity for these patterns to be learned.



Let's first of all analyze the big word **misunderstanding** and compare it to the Orton Dyslexia Society's telephone number.

Prefix #1	= mis	cf (1) long distance
Prefix #2	= under	cf. (800) toll free
Base	= stand	cf. ABCD
Suffix	= ing	cf. 123 7



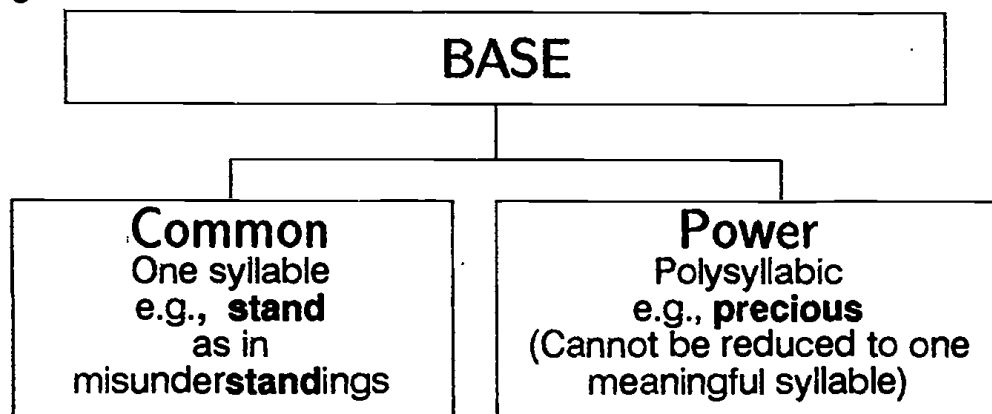
Any word in the English language may be defined as having a **BASE** sound that conveys meaning.

It may have almost any combination of prefixes and suffixes.

Although the concepts of prefixes and suffixes have been taught for years and years, this simple concept of a word containing a BASE sound is not taught in any elementary school, middle school or high school text that we have ever seen.

We hope that it soon will be standard teaching and common knowledge.

Of even more consequence is the fact that there are two kinds of bases. One base has one syllable only. The other base has more than one syllable. (See chart on next page)



There are two distinct types of **BASES** in the English Language. One may be called **COMMON** because most ordinary words in our language are of this nature and follow this pattern. The second may be called **POWER** because most of these words in our language carry special or significant meanings.

Sample Words with
Common Bases:

1. *stepping flashing playing*
2. *standing stamping skipping*

Sample Words with
Power Bases:

3. *crucial union patient*
4. *vision mirage unique*

Notice that the sample words with common bases have more letters and more consonant blends than the sample words with power bases. Yet they are easier to read and spell. Why? Because the base words are taught and the suffix -ing is taught. The same cannot be said about the words with power bases. Right? Can students be blamed for not learning what they haven't been taught? No. Can teachers be blamed for not teaching that which they haven't been taught? No. So?

So, those of us who really care about solving the literacy problem, must make the educational world aware of this simple concept. No matter how well students learn to read in grades one through three, if they haven't been taught the spelling patterns of power words, we cannot expect them to now read to learn especially when in grades four on up the curriculum is loaded with new words that have power bases not simple bases.

On the next page read the first paragraph. The following two paragraphs are exactly the same as the first with just a few

minor alterations in the visual appearance of some of the words. Please read each one and note the difference in your ability to decode the common and the power.

There are too distinct types of bases in the English language. One may be called common because most ordinary words in our language are of this nature and follow this pattern. The second may be called power because most of these words in our language carry special or significant meanings.

COMMON words in a simple "code"

Thayr ar too distinct tipes uv BAYsis in thuh English Language. Wun may bee Kawld **COMMON** bekuz most ordinary wurd in ar language ar uv this nature and FAHloh this pattern. Thuh second may bee kawld **POWER** bekuz most ov theez wurd in ar language kairy special ohr significant meeningz.

POWER words in a tougher "code"

There are two fodyomvy types of bases in the Rmh;odj :smhishr. One may be called **COMMON** because most ptfomstu words in our ;smhishr are of this msyitr and follow this [syrtm. The drvpmf may be called **POWER** because most of these words in our ;smhishr carry d[rvos; or dohmogovsmy meanings.

Although you were able to "break" the simple codes, please notice that the amount of mental effort required to break them interfered with your immediate fast comprehension. Decoding must be at the state of nearly 100% automaticity if true rapid comprehension is to take place. The second code is the one that happens when your fingers slide one space over on the typewriter. Breaking this code might have been easy for *you*. But most people would need to have it taught to them, and still they would have problems reading it. Right?

As should be obvious from the two illustrative paragraphs above, to be a good reader and speller one must know how to read and spell both types of words. For beginners, it is most important to learn the common words first. One can communicate to some degree using just common words. However, both **COMMON BASES** and **POWER BASES** have one thing in common. They have the same structures of sounds and use various different letters to represent sounds.

BASE
"stand"

(SHAPER/S) + VOWEL + (SHAPER/S)
st a nd

The simplest of all words are words that contain just a vowel.
No shaper in front. No shaper in back. *For example:*

Word	Shaper/s	Vowel	Shaper/s
<i>A</i>	-	AY	-
<i>oh</i>	-	OH	-
<i>I, eye, aye</i>	-	YH	-
<i>Oy!</i>	-	OY	-
<i>Ow!</i>	-	OW	-

Some words are shaped only in front. *For example:*

Word	Shaper/s	Vowel	Shaper/s
<i>bay</i>	<i>b</i>	AY	-
<i>bee, be, Bea</i>	<i>b</i>	EE	-
<i>by, bye, buy, bi-</i>	<i>b</i>	YH	-
<i>Bo, bow, beau</i>	<i>b</i>	OH	-
<i>boo!</i>	<i>b</i>	OO	-
<i>boy</i>	<i>b</i>	OY	-
<i>bow, bough</i>	<i>b</i>	OW	-

Some words are shaped at the end of the vowel. *For example:*

Word	Shaper/s	Vowel	Shapers
<i>at</i>	-	a	<i>t</i>
<i>ebb</i>	-	e	<i>b</i>
<i>it</i>	-	i	<i>t</i>
<i>on</i>	-	ah	<i>n</i>
<i>up</i>	-	u	<i>p</i>
<i>aim</i>	-	AY	<i>m</i>
<i>eat</i>	-	EE	<i>t</i>
<i>ice</i>	-	YH	<i>s</i>
<i>oat</i>	-	OH	<i>t</i>

Word	Shaper/s	Vowel	Shapers
<i>ooze</i>	-	OO	<i>z</i>
<i>ought</i>	-	AW	<i>t</i>
<i>out</i>	-	OW	<i>t</i>
<i>oil</i>	-	OY	<i>l</i>

Most words are simply vowel sounds shaped before and after with consonants. For example:

Word	Shaper	Vowel SOUND	Shaper	Suffix -s
<i>bat</i>	<i>b</i>	a	<i>t</i>	<i>bats</i>
<i>bet</i>	<i>b</i>	e	<i>t</i>	<i>bets</i>
<i>bit</i>	<i>b</i>	i	<i>t</i>	<i>bits</i>
<i>lot</i>	<i>l</i>	ah	<i>t</i>	<i>lots</i>
<i>but</i>	<i>b</i>	u	<i>t</i>	<i>buts</i>
<i>bait</i>	<i>b</i>	AY	<i>t</i>	<i>baits</i>
<i>beet</i>	<i>b</i>	EE	<i>t</i>	<i>beets</i>
<i>bite</i>	<i>b</i>	YH	<i>t</i>	<i>bites</i>
<i>boat</i>	<i>b</i>	OH	<i>t</i>	<i>boats</i>
<i>boot</i>	<i>b</i>	OO	<i>t</i>	<i>boots</i>
<i>foot</i>	<i>f</i>	uu	<i>t</i>	<i>foots</i>
<i>fought</i>	<i>f</i>	AW	<i>t</i>	-----
<i>void</i>	<i>v</i>	OY	<i>d</i>	<i>voids</i>
<i>bout</i>	<i>b</i>	OW	<i>t</i>	<i>bouts</i>

The 14* basic vowel sounds in the English language have multiple spellings. In fact, there are so many different spellings that some scholars such as Dewey (1970) have despaired of ever having a system to teach spelling and have advocated that we scrap our present system of spelling for a simplified phonetic spelling system (Rondthaler and Lias, 1988).

However, we feel that upon analysis there is an inner logic of our language that simplifies its spelling and makes it superior to that of a totally phonetic approach. More about that on page 23.

* We recognize the fact that linguists, phoneticians, and phonics instructors will probably never come to any agreement as to what a vowel truly is and how many there are. We have found it easier to teach vowels using "-R controls" to cover what we consider to be slight alterations in the basic vowel sounds rather than completely independent vowels, somewhat analogous to the concept of allophones.

VOWELS

It seems strange that although every word must have a vowel,* for the purposes of reading and spelling, vowels are not half as important as the consonants (which we sometimes call shapers).

Vowels removed from the above paragraph and replaced with asterisks:

*t s**ms str*ng* th*t *lth**gh *v*ry w*rd m*st h*v*
 * v*w*l, f*r th* p*rp*s*s *f r**d*ng *nd sp*ll*ng,
 v*w*ls *r* n* th*lf *s *mp*rt*nt *s th* c*ns*n*nts
 (wh*ch w* s*m*t*m*s c*ll sh*p*rs).

Consonants removed from the above paragraphs:

I* *ee** ***a**e **a* a***ou** e*e*y *o** *u**
 *a*e a *o*e*, *o* **e *u**o*e* o* *ea*i** a**
 ei**, *o*e** a*e *o* *a** a* i**o**a** a* **e
 *o**o*a** (***i** e *o*e*i*e* *a** **a*e**).

What stands out on the VOWEL chart on the next page is the utter simplicity of the short vowels in the common bases. This is perhaps why nearly all reading and spelling systems begin with the short vowels.

The next most obvious observation concerning the chart is that the LONG VOWELS appear to be the most inconsistent with 9 different spellings for the sound of "AY", 11 different spellings for "EE", 6 for "YH", 7 for "OH", and 9 for "OO".

Less obvious is the difference between the spellings used for vowel sounds in words that have POWER BASES (Polysyllabic) and those that have COMMON BASES (One syllable). One difference that we perceive is in the TIME ON TASK devoted to instruction in schools on the sounds in words and how these sounds are spelled.

* Yes, we know there are a few words without vowels, e.g., tsk, pssst, and sh-h.

However, we don't want to get bogged down in a controversy about current practices in the teaching, non-teaching, or incorrect teaching of "PHONIC RULES." (Anderson, 1984)
What we do want to stress is that:

**While the POWER words of our
language
require the most amount of
instructional time to learn,
they receive the least amount
of attention by
textbook authors
and
classroom teachers.**

● **Three out of every four words a fairly good reader cannot read contain the patterns of power words that are almost never taught by any teachers and are rarely if ever found in their text books.**

● **Isn't it about time we begin to teach these patterns?**

● **Is there a more convenient way of teaching these patterns than through the backdoor of spelling?**

Short Vowels

Spellings that occur in Common Bases (One Syllable) such as **stand** in **misunderstanding**

"a" = a in cat; ai in plaid.

"e" = e in bet; ea in sweat.

"i" = i in Jim;
y in gym.

"AH" = o in dot;
a in wad.

"u" = u in cut.

Spellings that occur in Power Bases (Polysyllabic) such as **special** in **specialties**

a = a in panic.

c = c in epic.

i = i in mimic;
y in physician;
i_e in definite;
a_c in private;
u_e in minute;
ai in fountain.

"AH" = o in comic;
oi in memoires.

"UH" = a in steward;
c in falter;
i in confirm;
o in onion;
u in lettuce;
ou in courage.

Notice the consistency among the spellings of the short vowels. Generally speaking, there are only two possibilities for any particular pattern. The only **apparent** exceptions come with suffixes such as **-ate**, **-ite**, and **-ute** that are all pronounced "it" as in **private**, **definite**, and **minute**. But since these suffixes are consistent in their pronunciations, they should not be considered "exceptions" to the silent e rule. In fact, because these words have a polysyllabic base we say:

The silent e rule applies **ONLY** to words that have a **COMMON** (one syllable) **BASE**.

Long Vowels

Spellings that occur in Common Bases (One syllable) such as **state** in under**state**ment

"AY" = ay in tray; ai in train;
ey in they; ei in vein;
eig in reign;
eigh in weigh;
ea in break;
a_e in brake.

"EE" = e in we; ee in wee;
ea in tea;
e_e in Pete;
ie in field;
ei in weird;
ey in key.

"YH" = i in I;
y in my;
igh in high;
ei in stein.

"OH" = o in go;
o_e in vote;
oa in goat;
ow in grow;
ough in dough.

"OO" = u in flu; ou in you
o in to; oo in too;
eu in feud; ew in dew;
ue in due;
ua in dual;
ui in fruit.

Spellings that occur in Power Bases (Polysyllabic) such as **special** in **specialties**

"AY" = e in debut;
é resumé;
éc in fiancée;
et in buffet.

"EE" = i in technique;
is in debris;
it in esprit;
i_e in petite.

"YH" = y in psycho.

"OH" = au in chauffeur;
eau in plateau;
ot in depot.

"OO" = ut in debut;
ou in vermouth;
eu in Europe.

Notice that there are **fewer variations** among the spelling of long vowels in the **POWER** bases. These spellings, however, are rarely if ever systematically taught in any spelling or reading series published anywhere.

Other Vowels

Spellings that occur in Common Bases

"UU" = u in put;
oo in foot.

"OY" = oi in boil;
oy in boy.

"OW" = ow in pow;
ou in pout.

"AW" = a in call;
aw in hawk;
al in talk;
au in fraud;
augh in taught;
ough in bought;
au_e in cause.

Spellings that occur in Power Bases

"UU" = u in butcher.

"OY" = oi in exploit;
oy in employ.

"OW" = ou in announce.

"AW" = au in sausage.

Notice that
unlike the short and long vowels
there are fewer variations among the
"OTHER VOWELS" in the POWER bases.

Shapers (Consonants)

Spellings that occur in Common Bases

b = b in bib;
bu in build.

d = d in did;
ed in roared.

f = f in fall;
ph in phone;
gh in cough.

g = g in go;
gh in ghost;
gu in guilt.

h = h in hat;
wh in who.

j = j in jam;
g in gem;
dge in bridge;
ge in George.

k = k in kiss;
c in cat;
ck in back;
q in quick.

l = l in luck;
ll in all.

m = m in me;
mb in dumb.

Spellings that occur in Power Bases

b = b in ballistics.

d = d in dedicated;
ed in resolved.

f = f in frantic;
ph in photograph.

g = g in gasoline;
gh in ghetto;
gue in fatigue.

h = h in hazardous;
j = in Jose and Baja.

j = j in jewelry;
ge in surgeon;
gi in religion.

k = k in kernel;
q in liquid;
qu in liquor;
que in unique;
ch in mechanic;
c in panic;
cu in circuit.

l = l in label;
ll in llama.

m = m in mutual;
mn in condemn.

Shapers (Consonants) Continued

Spellings that occur in Common Bases

n = n in new;
kn in knew;
gn in gnat.

p = p in pop.

r = r in roar;
wr in wrap.

s = s in sits;
ss in kiss;
ce in prince;
ts in prints;
se in rinse;
sc in scene.

t = t in toot;
ed in missed.

v = v in vat;
ve in solve.

w = w in wick;
u in quick

y = y in you;
nothing* in f-ew.

z = z in zoo;
s in throws;
se in cause.

Spellings that occur in Power Bases

n = n in notorious;
pn in pneumonia;
mn in mnemonics.

p = p in popular.

r = r in regular;
rh in rhapsody.

s = s in social;
ss in permissive;
ce in residence;
ts in residents;
se in response;
sc in descend.

t = t in tenant;
ed in released;
pt in pterodactyl.

v = v in victory;
ve in relieve.

w = w in warrant;
u in Guatamala.

y = y in yodel;
i in union;
nothing* in union.

z = z in zebra;
s in appraisal.

* The proper linguistic term is null. The consonant /y/ is frequently without a letter to indicate its presence. See "The Case of the Invisible Y or Why is there a Y in You but not in union and Eunice?" This pamphlet is free from AVKO with a large self-addressed envelope with postage for 3 oz.

**Beginning Special Shapers that
occur in Common Bases**

Sound Spelling

bl	= bl in black
br	= br in bring
by	= b- in bugle
ch	= ch in church
dr	= dr in drop
dw	= dw in dwell
fl	= fl in flop;
fr	= fr in free;
fy	= f- in few
gl	= gl in glass;
gr	= gr in grass
gw	= gu in Guam
hy	= h- in huge
kl	= cl in class
kr	= cr in creep
kr	= chr in Christ
kw	= qu in quit
ky	= c- in cute
my	= m- in mule
pl	= pl in play
pr	= pr in pray
py	= p- in pew
sf	= sph in sphere
sh	= sh in shop; s in sure
sk	= sk in skip; sc in scat; sch in school
skr	= scr in scrap
skw	= squ in squat
sl	= sl in slip
sm	= sm in small
sn	= sn in snip
sp	= sp in spot
spl	= spl in splash
spr	= spr in spring
st	= st in stop
str	= str in strap
sw	= sw in swim;
tr	= tr in trap
tw	= tw in twin
vy	= vi in view

**Beginning Special Shapers that
occur in Power Bases**

Sound Spelling

bl	= bl in blatant
br	= br in brilliant
by	= b- in bureau
ch	= t in nature
dr	= dr in drama
dw	= dw in dwindle
fl	= fl in fluid; phl phlebitis
fr	= fr in frenzy; phr phrensy
fy	= f- in futile
gl	= gl in glucose
gr	= gr in grunion
gw	= gu in Guatamala
hy	= h- in heuristic
kl	= cl in clients
kr	= cr cripple; chr Christian
kw	= qu in question
ky	= c- in cuneiform
my	= m- in mutants
pl	= pl in placid
pr	= pr in proficient
py	= p- in pewter
sf	= sph in sphygmometer
sh	= ch chauffeur; si tension; ssi mission; xi anxious; ti initial; sch schlimazel
sk	= sk skeptic; sc scavenge; sch in schedule
skr	= scr in scrabble
skw	= squ in squabble
sl	= sl in slumber
sm	= sm in smother
sn	= sn in snivelling
sp	= sp in spiritual
spl	= spl in splendid
spr	= spr in sprinkle
st	= st in stellar
str	= str in strenuous
sw	= sw swivel; persuasive
tr	= tr in tradition
tw	= tw in twiddle
vy	= vi in review
zh	= s treasure; si in vision

20

Ending Special Shapers:

bd	= bed in robbed; = bbed in robbed;	ns	= nse in rinse
bz	= bs in grabs	ns	= nce in prince
bz	= bes in babes	nts	= nts in prints
dz	= ds in lads	nt	= nt in plant
dz	= des in shades	ps	= ps in laps:
fs	= ffs in stiff	pse	= psc in lapse
	= fts in lifts	pst	= psed in lapsed
	= fes in safes	rb	= rb in garb
ft	= ft in raft	rbd	= rbed in barbed
	= ffed in staffed	rbz	= rbs in barbs
gd	= gged in dragged	rd	= rd in yard
gz	= gs in drags	rdz	= rds in yards
jd	= ged in raged	rf	= rf in scarf
ks	= cks in socks; x in sox kes in lakes	rft	= rfed in barted
kt	= ct in pact	rg	= rg in burg
	cked in packed	rj	= rge in large
ld	= ld in build	rjd	= rged in barged
	lled in billed	rk	= rk in dark
	led in ruled	rks	= rks in marks
lf	= lf in shelf	rks	= rx in Marx
lfs	= lfs in shelves	rkt	= rked in parked
lj	= ldge in buldge	rl	= rl in Carl
ljd	= ldged in buldged	rld	= rled in curled
lk	= lk in milk	rlz	= rls in curls
lks	= lks in milks	rm	= rm in arm
lkt	= lked in bilked	rmd	= rmed in farmed
lm	= lm in film	rmz	= rms in farms
lmd	= lmed in filmed	rn	= rn in barn
lmz	= lms in films	rnd	= rned in earned
ln	= ln in kiln	rnz	= rns in learns
lp	= lp in help	rp	= rp in burp
lps	= lps in helps	rps	= rps in burps
lpt	= lped in helped	rpt	= rped in warped
ls	= lse in false	rs	= rse in nurse
	= lts in faults	rt	= rt in art
lt	= lt in silt	rv	= rve in carve
lz	= lls in bills	rzd	= rved in curved
md	= med in aimed; mmed in dimmed	rz	= rs in cars
mp	= mp in camp	sk	= sk in ask
mps	= mp in limps		sc in disc
	mpe in glimpse	sm	= sm in spasm
mt	= mpt in tempt	sp	= sp in grasp
	miped in camped	sps	= sps in lisps
mz	= ms in rams	spt	= sped in grasped
nd	= nd in band; nned in banned	st	= st mist
ngd	= nged in banged		ssed in missed
ngk	= nk in bank		sked in asked
ngkt	= nked in banked		ced in raced
ngz	= ngs in bangs		sed in chased
			ste in chaste
		vd	= ved in loved
		vz	= ves in loves
		zd	= zed in hazed
			sed in raised
			zzed in razzed

Observations about the relationship of the spellings of consonant sounds (shapers) to reading and teaching.

The beginning sounds (onsets in the latest jargon) are taught more completely and systematically than the medial or ending sounds (rimes!). For that reason, students are far more likely to misspell medial or ending consonant sounds than beginning sounds. For example, students are far more likely to misspell the ending "st" sound in *paced* or *paste* than they are the beginning "st" in the words *stop* and *start*.

If medial and ending sounds are more difficult to learn than beginning sounds, it only seems reasonable that we should spend at least as much time on task learning spellings of the ending sounds (rimes) as on the beginning sounds (onsets).

A few very highly consistent ending sounds **rarely taught** but often misspelled:

Onset Sound	+ Rime Sound	Spelling onset + rime	Sample words
"sh"	"us"	ci+ous	precious, delicious
"sh"	"us"	ti+ous	nutritious, ambitious
"sh"	"ul"	ci+al	special, social
"sh"	"ul"	ti+al	initial, essentials
"sh"	"un"	ssi+on	permission, mission
"sh"	"un"	ci+on	suspicion, coercion
"sh"	"un"	ti+on	ignition, solution
	"g"	gue	vague, intrigue
"k"	"ul"	cle	miracle, icicle

It is quite true that after learning the basic phonic patterns some students will learn on their own the rest of the patterns. If you are a good speller, you are one of the lucky ones. You learned all on your own. You were never taught the advanced patterns. If you count yourself as one of the world's worst spellers, then you are one of many who needed the opportunity to be taught these patterns but weren't given the chance.

Synopsis of Spelling Structures of the English Language
as presented in
The Patterns of English Spelling (McCabe, 1992)

Volume

Number	TYPES OF WORDS	EXAMPLES			PAGES
1	Short Vowels: CVC	dad	get	tin	101-160
2	Short Vowels: CVCC	band	went	itch	201-282
3	Long Vowels: CV & CVCe	go	nice	tube	301-380
4	Long Vowels: CVVC	raid	seem	roam	401-442
5	-R & W- controls	car	cart	ward	501-534
6	Basic Suffixes	batter	battle	dreadful	601-691
7	The Ending Y's	destiny	simplify	trickiest	701-764
8	Power Suffixes	precious	partially	permission	801-880
9	Advanced Patterns	techniques	chauvinist	fiancée	901-962
10	Prefixes/Suffixes/Roots	psychology	autograph	synthesizer	1001-74

Part of a Sample page showing the patterns --

AD DAD ("DAD") FAMILY

bad**had**

mad

sad

glad

lad

lads

laddy

laddies

clad

dad

dads

daddy

daddies

his dad's car

their dads' cars

fad

fads

pad

pads

padded

padding rice paddy

paddies

ad

ads

Tad

Tad's dad

tad

**Rationale for the basic superiority of the current
English system of spelling when compared to
any proposed **phonetic** spelling system.**

Current English Spelling

A Phonetic System*

1. The past tense in most English words is simply spelled -ed. In a phonetic spelling system, there would be four different spellings.

The car roared past.
We talked to him.
We talked about him.
He added it up.

Thu kaar rord past.
We tawk to him.
We tawkt about him.
He adud it up.

2. The morphemic relationships that are evident in current spelling would be obliterated in any phonetic spelling system

atrocious / atrocities
syllable / syllabic
magic / magician
mason / masonic
finite / infinite

utroshus / utraasutecz
silubul / silaabik
majik / mujishun
maesun / musaanik
fieniet / infinit

3. The grammatical function of words which are technically homophones would be obscured by having a phonetic spelling of both:

missed / mist
passed / past
tacked / tact
bends / Ben's
they're / their / there

mist
past
takt
benz
thaer

4. There are hundreds of different dialects of English. We all can read the same words and translate them immediately into our own dialect. When a native Bostonian reads the words, car, bar, star, etc., he hears "kah" "bah" and "stah" in his head. The Englishman reads the word herb and pronounces it "HURB." The American reads herb and pronounces it "URB." Which spelling should be used? The British "HURB" or the American "URB." How about the word schedule. Should we use "skedjul" or "shedul"? If a writer wants a person to pronounce words according to a particular dialect, we have the tools to do so. "Ah'm a comin' daown rat naow" is the way some writers think a person from North Carolina would say "I am coming down right now." With a strictly phonetic alphabet, everyone who doesn't speak the standard dialect that is used, would find it harder to understand what is being read.

* rules proposed by the American Language Academy (Rondthaler and Lias, 1986)

References

- Anderson, Richard C. *Becoming a Nation of Readers: The Report of the Commission on Reading*. Champaign, Illinois: Center for the Study of Reading, 1984.
- Dewey, Godfrey, Ed.D. *Relative Frequency of English Spellings*. Columbia University, New York: Teachers College Press, 1970
- Fitzsimmons, Robert J. & Bradley M. Loomer. *Spelling: Learning and Instruction*. Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1978.
- Greene, Harry A. *The New Iowa Spelling Scale*. Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1954.
- McCabe, Donald J. *English Spelling: the "Simple," the "Fancy," the "Insane," the "Tricky," and the "Scrunched Up."* Clio, Michigan: AVKO Educational Research Foundation, 1991.
- McCabe, Donald J. *The Patterns of English Spelling*. Clio, Michigan: AVKO Educational Research Foundation, 1992.
- Rondthaler, Edward and Edward J. Lias, Eds. *Dictionary of American Spelling, A Simplified Alternative Spelling for the English Language, Written as it Sounds, Pronounced as it's Written*. New York: The American Language Academy, 1986.
- Webb, James E. & McCabe, Donald J. *AVKO Spelling "Difficulty" Dictionary*. Clio, Michigan: AVKO Educational Research Foundation, 1990.